

**PRESS RELEASE****Fort Lee Public Affairs Office****PR #06-040-1****February 8, 2006****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Culinary Competition Advancer****From Body Armor to Chef Coats: Army culinary artists converge on Fort Lee for 31st Annual Culinary Arts Competition**

FORT LEE, Va. - America's war fighters are seen day-in and day-out defending freedom around the world, but what many Americans forget is that a number of her Soldiers are not front-line infantry or armor troops. They serve as a medic, truck driver and the person every Soldier loves to see, the cook.

Nearly 200 of these Soldier-Chefs will be converging on Fort Lee for the 31st annual U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition which will get underway March 6 and run through March 17 here at the home of U.S. Army Logistics.

These culinary artists from U.S. Army installations around the world are trading in their body armor and M-16 rifles for filet knives, spatulas and pastry bags to determine who has the best food preparation skills, techniques and knowledge in the nation's most prestigious competition of its kind.

"These culinary professionals are warriors first and artists second," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 David Longstaff, chief of the culinary craft skills training branch at Fort Lee, noting that many of the competitors have served overseas in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Longstaff added the annual competition held at Fort Lee is bigger than culinary competitions held by the American Culinary Federation (ACF) and the Chicago Food Show.

These Soldier-Chefs will be vying for individual and team gold, silver and bronze medals in 14 different categories. These experienced military professionals will exhibit their skills in preparing nutritious hot foods, cold buffets, pastries and chocolate works of art. Competitors will be judged by a field of internationally-known chefs.

The Fort Lee event is the premier culinary competition in the military. Teams must enter 14 different categories including live cooking, team cold buffet, and culinary knowledge bowl. Nine different categories are selected for the cold food but over 60-percent of the overall team score is evaluated on taste and proper cooking techniques.

The competition also serves as an arena for military personnel to try out for the United States Army Culinary Arts Team (USACAT). The world champion USACAT team is recognized by the ACF as the official military team representing the United States in the World Association of Cooks Societies (WACS) sanctioned culinary competitions around the world. The USACAT competed in the World Culinary Olympics held in Erfurt, Germany in October 2004 bringing home second place overall, capturing 16 gold medals and 17 silver medals.

For further information, contact the Fort Lee Public Affairs Office at 804-734-7451, visit us on the web at www.ima.lee.army.mil/sites/pao/CulinaryCompetition_2006/index.htm, or visit the ACES website at www.quarter-master.army.mil/aces.

A Media Credential request can be found at www.ima.lee.army.mil/sites/pao/CulinaryCompetition_2006/index.htm. Please fill out the form and send back to us via fax at 804-734-7488 NLT March 1, 2006.